Essential drugs at cheaper rates

1210. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government have taken, so far, to keep its promise of providing 354 essential drugs available at cheaper rates as well as to follow the Supreme Court's directive to Government that such life-saving drugs do not fall out of price control;

(b) whether Government propose to allocate more budgetary provisions during current year as compared to last year in this regard;

(c) what is the reaction of the Indian Drug Manufacturer Association in this regard; and

(d) the steps Government have taken in this regard in the interest of the common man?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) to (d) A Committee undor the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (PI) was constituted to examine the span of price control (including trade margin) in the light of National Common Minimum Programme and the observations of the Supreme Court in SLP No (C) 3668/2003 and to suggest measures for fulfilling the objective of National Common Minium Programme to ensure the availability of life saving drugs at reasonable prices. This Committee in its interim report submitted to the Government has inter-alia recommended that the National List of Essential Medicines 2003 should form the basket for identification of drugs under price control. Subsequently a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen was constituted to explore options other than price control to make available life saving drugs at reasonable prices. The Task Force in its report submitted to the Government on 20.9.05 has recommended, inter alia that National List of Essential Medicines containing 354 items should form the basis of drugs to be considered for intensive price monitoring, ceiling prices and imposing price control if any.

In this regard the Indian Drug Manufacturer Association (IDMA) has represented mainly for freezing all essential drug prices at current levels, automatic increase of price upto 5% per annum, Bulk drugs to be kept out of price control, removal of Central Excise and other taxes on all medicines, review of Essential list after five years etc.

The Government, based on the recommendations of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (Pharmaceuticals) and the Task Force under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen, Principal Advisor, Planning Commission, the Government have drafted a National Pharmaceutical Policy, 2006 (Part-A), which has been circulated to various stakeholders seeking their comments. Based on the comments received the Government is likely to finalize the new Policy shortly.

Some of the salient recommendations of the national Pharmaceutical Policy, 2006 (Part-A), which contains issues other than statutory price control pertaining to schemes for providing accessibility of drugs to the common man are:

1) Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana for the BPL families.
2) Larger allocation would be made for National Illness Assistance Fund.
3) State Illness Assistance Funds would be set up in all states with financial assistance from Central Government.
4) Revolving Funds for BPL families would be set up in all the Central Government hospitals.
5) States would also be asked to set up revolving funds in all the government hospitals for free treatment of BPL families.
6) In order to increase the reach of poor people to these funds District Level Revolving Fund would also be maintained The quantum of the District Level Revolving Fund would be Rs. 1.00 crore and this amount would be provided by the Central Government.
7) Rajasthan model of Medicare Relief Societies to be replicated in all the states.

Increase in price of life saving drugs

†1211. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to high cost of some life saving drugs, general public is not in a position to buy the same;

(b) if so, the measures taken by Government in this regard;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.